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"Where It Listeth"

MARY NORSWORTHY SHEPARD

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"WHERE IT LISTETH"

BY

MARY NORSWORTHY SHEPARD

BOSTON
SHERMAN, FRENCH & COMPANY
1912

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE TORCH	1
WILLOW-SILVER	2
YOUTH OF THE YEAR	3
SONG OF PERSEPHONE	4
SONG OF DIS	5
GARGOYLE	6
A BOY TO A TREE	7
MUTED.	8
THE SHUTTLE	9
BORDERLAND	10
THE POOL	11
"ONE STAR DIFFERETH FROM ANOTHER STAR"	12
AT OXFORD	13
GRIEF	14
CREATION	15
BIRTHRIGHT	16
"SO MUCH A PART OF ME YOU HAVE BECOME"	17
TO JOHN KEATS	18
FROM A CAGE	19
THE LESSON	20
THE HOUR GLASS	21
HOPE	22
NOT OF THIS WORLD	23
A SOURCE	24
HERB O'GRACE	26
SUI VICTOR	27
IN BAGLEY WOOD	28
BURNING-BUSH	29
THE ASTRONOMER	30

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE READER TO THE POET	31
SIESTA	32
THE ARC DE TRIOMPHE AT SUNRISE	34
THE BOW	35
WIND FROM THE EAST	36
BEAUVAIS CATHEDRAL	37
EXPERIENCE	38
NAMESAKE	39
TO A YOUNG POET	40
HAUS-GEIST	41
DESERT	42
LOVE'S SONG	43
SIMILITUDE	44
RECOGNITION	45
ARBOR VITAE	46
WINDS	47
ROSA BEATA	48
PARADOX	49
HOLIDAY	50
TEMPTATION	51
A GATE OF DREAM	52
THE SURPRISE	53
ON THE GORNEGRAT	54
FOLK SONG	56
ROSA DOLOROSA	57
VIGIL	58
GOSSIPS	59
TO-DAY	60
THE GLASS	61
REVELATION	62
TO ROBERT AND ELIZABETH BROWNING	63

CONTENTS

	PAGE
MIRACLE	64
TIDES	65
EAST TO WEST	66
THE PAWN	67
THE SHUT DOOR	68
URBIUM FLORES	69
TRANSMIGRATION	72
KINSHIP	73
POET-BIRTH	74
PERSONALITY	75
PILGRIMAGE	77

THE TORCH

This torch was handed me by one who went
Faring to surer shores, o'er wider main.
His look was like a god's, but overspent,
As if he too on Caucasus had lain.
Kin to Prometheus, he his kinship wore
Between his eyes, a signal to his kind;
And that dim cryptogram, writ evermore
By soul on flesh, on body by the mind.
Through ways by earthy gusts too much o'er-
blown,
The hollow of his hand had pent this fire;
Fanned by his breath, its light had been out
thrown
Up those steep darks where those who climb
aspire.
Leave me thy password, O thou vanished one!
"Man can hereafter do what man has done."

WILLOW-SILVER

Silent, aloof, as some mist-circled tree,
Within the shadow of my mood I stand,
And its cold breath is like a pressing band,
That cramps my heart and all its energy.
And then, you come! the sun upon your hair!
Free as the passing of the shriving wind,
That straight its way through every mist will find,
To scatter it, in bluer, clearer air:
And, as the Willow thrills the gale to meet,
Turning her silver to its gay caress,
So would my silent soul itself confess.
I am the tree, and you the wind, my sweet!
To you, disparter of the dreary haze,
Turns all the silver meaning of my days.

Friends, I did know the maid had passed this
way,
For through the orchard's branching tracery
The wind had blown her rosy frock about,
To float and catch on every naked tree.

And where the brook, beneath the Alder shade,
Cleaves through the mead its Hyla-haunted rim,
Her purple veil had floated to the ground,
And the bright sod with Violets was dim.

But when I knelt beside the rounded pool,
The radiant double of the sky to see,
Over my shoulder, in that limpèd glass,
She bent, and looked at me!

SONG OF PERSEPHONE

When first I sat within this purple shade
My arms yearned back to Mother Ceres' breast;
My eyes were wet, like eyes of any maid
Caught from the caging of the homing nest.
I visioned olive boughs, and then the cool
Of Enna's green, edged with a silver hem
Of frail Anemones; and that one glistening pool
Wherein the bather swayed, like lily stem.
That was long since: and now my eyes are dark
For want of tears; and from the knowledge stored
In womb of earth; and from that circlet's mark
Set on my brow by Dis, my love and lord.
Since when, not even for the gift of tears
Would I forego these weighted, conscious years.

SONG OF DIS

To the cold fire of a nether world
Thou broughtest warmth, and light to my black mood;
And every pretty grace that runs impearled
On the gold thread of a sweet maidenhood,
Has set a taper in my lonely dark:
But more than this, dull ears have been unsealed
At touch of love; and I begin to hark
To plaints and cries from ravished Enna's field,
To Ceres' moan, and bleat from lambs forlorn;
I see a stubbled mead where should arise
That many pillared house of gold, the corn;
And black the wreath that on the altar lies.

Is this the chrism by the gods decreed,
To part thee from me for another's need?

GARGOYLE

High, where stars walk through the night,
And the sun, its daily flower
Drops, upon the wrinkled tower;

Weird, against that mid-day light,
—Weirder, 'gainst the purple arch
Under which those star hosts march—

Breaks the gargoyle's stony leer,
As he cranes from parapet
Where his sprawling arms are set.

Ugliness, without a peer!
Thou wert carven, line by line,
Without word or wish of thine;

But thy maker set thee here,
That from thy misshapen lip,
Clearest rain from heaven might drip.

A BOY TO A TREE

O LITTLE Pine,
Nursling now of the forest's flock;
What shall your fate be,
When, grown to symmetry,
Prone with the Fir and Oak,
With severing shock
You've felt the axe's stroke,
O little Tree!
Shall it be yours, to fling your stalwart length,
And give your strength,
To bridge for timid feet
Some yawning gap,
Some precipice profound,
And make complete
A way to solid ground?
Is this your fate? or shall you roof in love,
With your low beam, some family hearth above?
Or else, mayhap,
Wed to a shining sail,
As valiant mast, you'll voyage sun and gale!

O little Tree,
Is it for you, or is it all for me,
That these thoughts come and pass,
Like light upon the grass?

MUTED

Through the deep grasses winds a scroll of gold,
Fed by the turnings of a hidden spring
That has no other voice in which to sing
Than Mary-buds and Iris leaves unfold.
In their bright script is writ its silent song.
Gay as a Missal is the sober mead,
And ye who loiter there the song may read
Of a hid life, that silent winds along.
So, when I'm mute my faithful love to speak,
And there are stirrings at its source profound,
Too vast, too deep for any voicèd sound,
Then, Sweet, must you my silent music seek;
Search, if its hidden life no flower feeds,
No Marigold or Iris 'mongst the weeds.

THE SHUTTLE

Where the hooded East has spun her thread
From her distaff's cloudy gray,
Through her shadow fingers it has sped
Upon its webbèd way.

Across the vasty loom of the sky
It passes again—again—
Insistent ever, the long threads ply,
Weaving a warp of rain:

And the long-drawn, silken spinnings stretch,
Slanting and tenuous-fine,
On the dark lift of the sky to etch
A shining line on line.

Over and under that warp of rain
My fancy's shuttle I've thrown;
But the woven visions—misty, vain,
At break of sun are flown!

BORDERLAND

We have not met where rivers rise,
In cradles up above the skies;
And flowers spill a fragrant rill
To quench the thirst of tired eyes.

Nor where those rivers wider flow,
And trees their latticed shadows throw,
With clasping arms and healing balms,
Like that glad stream the angels know.

Yet, surely, there's another tide
That we have known and walked beside;
A pleasant stream, of talk and dream,
That shoots its waters far and wide.

We've often cast our pebbles there,
And wondered how, and when, and where,
Those widening rounds should reach their bounds,
And dared, as loving spirits dare.

But, best, above that river's flow,
Gazing, where rocky altars glow
With visions, framed in sunset flame,
We've known what loving spirits know.

Written in a copy of Henry van Dyke's "Little Rivers."

THE POOL

In the far west, where her dusk garden glows,
With the young winds about her feet at play,
Paces the Evening; purple, gold and rose
Bloom down her path at dying of the day.

Softly she steps, and breathes a little song;
He who has ears may hear her lullabies;
Her shining hair floats the wide sky along,
And firstlings of the stars are her clear eyes.

The sodden fields are bright for many a mile
With the warm radiance from that streaming hair;
E'en that forsaken pool has caught her smile,
And, from its dark and miserable lair,

Rounds to a splendid, burnished bowl of gold,
The fallen roses from her hand to hold.

"ONE STAR DIFFERETH FROM ANOTHER STAR"

Corralled by window-pane,
—A blue and dusky square,—
Fencèd by window-bar—
A garden plot of air,—

Your measured altitude
Beareth a flower each night;
Watered by lunar mists,
Silvered by unseen light.

Punctual to my gaze,
It flares its petals pale,
That, centifolious,
A lambent light exhale.

For me, it shines, a flower,
For you, a fitful spark;
To you, at most, a world; to me,
The one break in my dark.

AT OXFORD*

The sun has slipped from off the Bodleian
dome,
And Mary's spire blurs in the soft grey;
While all along the circling, dusky gloam
Oxford unrolls her tapestried array
Of roof and tower and crenellated walls,
Transmuted to a dim and dreamlike hue:
Even young gardens, clasping ancient halls,
Lose sprightly tints at falling of the dew.
Near the "faire gate" of Tom, I count the toll,
The hundred and the one; and fancies dwell,
Not on the hundred scholars in the roll,
But on that *one*, remembered of the bell
Through all the centuries; his face, unknown,
Yet, conjured, by that measured, haunting tone.

* The bell of Christ Church College, Oxford, at nine o'clock, each evening, sounds one hundred and one strokes, in memory of the hundred and one scholars of the original foundation.

GRIEF

Trail of the withered leaf,
Blaze of the broken bough;
Where I stand, a centred soul,
In my little space of Now.

The wood path stretches long,
The roads bend round the world;
And earth itself is travelling far,
On its starlit pathway hurled.

Infinitesimal I,
Is hub of nebulous spheres;
But for vasty sights and sounds
Has neither eyes nor ears.

For the wood path, where I stand,
Is wounded unto death,
And one small crimson leaf
Holds all my sight and breath.

Its slender point of flame
Is all that I can see;
And my soul itself goes fluttering down
With that red leaf from the tree.

CREATION

In visions of the night, I saw Love, brooding, bent,
To launch, like paper boats, stars in the firmament.

And the rainbow bubble of Time I saw Him make,
To poise, and float 'round the stars, 'till He bade it break.

And Time and the stars seemed purposeless toys,—and then,
I saw the look in Love's face, when He fashioned men.

BIRTHRIGHT

When my soul with another soul keeps tryst,
Ofttimes it finds that tryst is in the dark;
Between us, that impenetrable mist
That must the boundaries of our being mark.
I stand perplexed, and feel as Psyche did,
Who heard Love's speech, and felt the stir of wings;
But speech, too often, like a chrysalid
Cabins and hides the life of precious things.
Yet, when in Psyche's lamp I'd stir the flame,
To gaze into that other soul's recess,
To wrest its meaning and its mystic name,
The lamp slips low, my hand drops powerless;
Into that innermost I dare not see,
Such lonely birthright has humanity.

"SO MUCH A PART OF ME YOU HAVE BECOME"

So much a part of me you have become,
That, when to praise you doth another speak,
The shy blood steals up to my brow and cheek,
And with your own sweet shame, my lips are
dumb.

TO JOHN KEATS

Like any falcon of old pageantries,
That wrist-enthroned, its master's mood obeys,
I, too, wear jesses; for your linkèd phrase
Chains me with bells of glorious harmonies.
So, listening, this falcon-gentle stays
Your vibrant voice; and when the cord you seize,
To toss me higher than the highest breeze,
On the bright track of your ecstatic lays,
I follow, follow, with my beating heart
Sounding sweet echoes; and the sky ways, too,
Throb with the rapture. Then the clouds dispart
To make new paths to heaven; and the blue,
Like a great flower, drops its leaves apart,
Riven by splendour, where your song beats through.

FROM A CAGE

Outside, where Zephyr blows,
The songs are all a tilting,
Coquetting and a lilting;
And notes about are blown
Like petals, downward strewn
From a hundred-leafèd rose.

But my little heart is caged,
And it mopes there all enraged;
Its little wings hang straight,
To match its sorry fate;
And its pipe is dry and still
As a parchèd, pebbly rill,
When the sun has drunk its fill.

Ah, you, who locks can pick,
Who know alone the trick
That slips my latchet,—quick,
Come ope this hateful door,
To let me blueward soar;
And such a song I'll pour,
The stars shall hear your fame!
The sun shall learn your name!

THE LESSON

When he of bow and arrows came
To her I love, she won his heart:
He taught her how to play his game,—
The tightened string—the singing dart.
Of all that ruthless, tender art
He made her adept. Loath to part,
He lingered slow—then gave his bow
And quiver into her sweet hold,
Bidding her use them as she willed.
And she, with all her art grown bold,
The arrows straight before her spilled;
And kept but one,—that one for me—
A sharp one—to my misery!

THE HOUR GLASS

Watching it filter its momentous sand,
I turn the carven toy, now down, now up;
Alas! did I but know to turn its cup
To where young Joy once caught me by the hand,
And gave his eyes as mirror to my own,
That I should gaze therein. The radiant smile
That curved his lips, was mine, the blessed while
He held my hand. Like his, my hair was blown
In a bright wind; and from its loosened knot
Fell flowers of Arcadie. Ah, restore!
Ye sands, that pile as if the past were not,
Ye sands, that mock with Never and No More!
I yet shall see you, outspilled and forgot,
On a far-scanned, illimitable shore!

HOPE

Sea is dark,
Sky is dark;
Light is focused
To a spark;
Where, fire-white
In its flight,
Burns the white breast of the Lark.

Lonely one,
Shooting far,
Against dark sky
Like spray-wet star!
From unrest
Of my own breast,
Has your wing just broken bar?

Are you that thing,
That, in despite
Rack of cloud,—
Passed from sight
Through its chill,—
Insistent still,
Bears imperishable light!

NOT OF THIS WORLD

He cannot hawk his wares about the mart,
They are too much the colour of his soul;
Dangle, for custom's bid, his shrinking heart,
Measure its beatings by expected dole.
This little rhyme, that's wet with dews of dawn,
Young as a bird's pipe, or a flageolet,
Is a child's faith, the voicing of his morn,
—We've faced the lions with its amulet!—
This, is a clouded song, sung in the night,
With stars outblown, and fog upon his face;
Yet, he still thrilled to feel the unseen light
That, though unseen, illumines every place;
The light by which his single soul is led,
Unwitting of the laurel round his head.

A SOURCE

I ROUND a rocky cup in a fold of hill,
Assured, as long as I thirst, and learn to be still,
From the dark and cool below my cup will fill.

And as the ripples brim, I tremblingly know
From touch of my rocky hem, a virtue will go
In streams, that water the world, in quenchless flow.

What though the brim be close that so chafes my soul,
And a slender, unseen spring be my daily dole,
If afar some parchèd mouth drink from my bowl?

Where streams repeat the world, like a pictured page,
I yearn to mirror the souls whose thirst I assuage;
Isolation bars me apart, like bird in cage.

Concentred, I lay bare my heart to the skies,
To pulse with an opal throb in the fair sunrise,
And deepen, where midday's blue intensifies.

From clouds, awing with flame, in feathered
flight,
From the stars that look me through all the
long, soft night,
From silver dews of the moon, I drink in light.

For sake of thirsty souls I may ne'er descry,
From the rock, where separate, I so thwarted
lie,
The wave I pour for their need, I sanctify.

HERB O' GRACE

When that slim treader of the air, the wind,
Bends her long dances through the archèd green,
In the thin air no footprint can I find,
And no man has that sealèd vision seen.
Is there no herb o' grace to touch my eyes,
That I may see as tree or flower sees;
Behold the incense from the grasses rise,
Vision the swaying motion of the breeze?
—There, where the laurel and the sunshine meet,
Is it but laurel, vibrant in the light?
Or do a lover and a maiden greet,
She, still atremble from her sudden flight?
There, where the quiver of his rays is poured,
Is it shy Daphne, yielding to her lord?

SUI VICTOR

Up from the battle, sword at side,
The people surged to see you ride:
Your sky was flags, your carpet, bays!
Apotheosis of your days!

I saw you, outcast, and alone,
Biting the dust, your honour prone;
Holding your heart's joy in your hand,
Laying it down at your own command:
No medal struck, no flag on wall,
Imperator!—your soul, your thrall!
That day, your bravest day of all.

IN BAGLEY WOOD

Have you, by chance, e'er walked in Bagley Wood,
—Pacing with Twilight and with shadow things—
And felt, upon the homespun of your mood,
A golden network of imaginings
Flung from the tender throat of one small bird
That dwells and sings in that green anchorage?
Ah, then, in sudden rapture, you have heard
In that bright, sobbing song, a subtle gauge
For speechless griefs that with the night assail,
For speechless joys that rise with every morn;
And known, too, why it's said, the Nightingale
Flutes her delight, her breast against a thorn.
Blest bird, though with the thorn my heart is wrung,
I yet am dumb, my song goes still unsung.

BURNING-BUSH

Sometimes a spirit steals through still of dew,
And on my spirit lays a thrilling hand;
When, to the parable of sky and land
My clouded sense is sensitized anew.

Such accolade divine came in this guise:
A Lilac, by the garden pale, became
Sudden, at dawn, ablaze with purple flame;
Its cloudy fragrance swinging, censer-wise.

To foot of Horeb, where God's voice was heard,
My garden path went wide, like Midian plain;
And there, before another burning fane,
I hid my face, and waited for the word.

THE ASTRONOMER

Around my tower,
Where bosky clouds of night their branches lace,
Bright petalled stars
Prick the soft gloom, and make a garden space.

These, when I reach
To mete and weigh them in my little scale,
I know are part
Of a vast flora, past the cloudy veil.

So, round the thoughts
Measured and labelled as my earthly gain,
Gleams the vast thought
That dimly felt, I struggle to attain.

THE READER TO THE POET

You, who on windy pinnacles of thought
So oft, by night, have 'scaped the ground, to stand;
And on ecstatic wings of vision caught,
Have walked in sunrise rooms of sunrise land;
Have marked that silver urn young Cynthia brings
To pour its stream, or heard the brimming lap
Through all those naked wands of wistful Spring's;
Wands, that the beauties of the year enwrap.
Cross that dim way that bridges man to man,
To me, expectant at my spirit's door;
You, so sure-footed on that dizzy span,
Empty your bright pack on my spirit's floor!
Let me, though alien, for a passing hour
Share beatific vision and its power.

THE ARC DE TRIOMPHE AT SUNRISE

Piled from great deeds and diademed with fame,
See where it arches, grim against the morn;
Deeply incised with deathless name on name,
The tole of agonies and lives forlorn.

An awful cement lies between its stones,
And down its sides blood-tears, unending, drip;
And yet, to one who harks, behind the moans
The discords blend to human comradeship:

Through all the blare of armament and power,
Sound the pure strains of love and sacrifice,
That swell to paean where the dawn's soft flower
Breathes o'er the battling world an armistice.

THE BOW

As in a lissom Dryad of the trees,
The soul of the green wood dwells in my bow;
Its gleaming lines inward and outward flow,
And curve, as she bends pliant to the breeze.
Might I the Dryad's voice on it bestow,
When its tense cord is fingered by the wind,
And it could sing, like other Dryad kind,
What blissful song might stir the golden glow!
Those tender tunes, learned of the lisping leaves,
Fluted by all that budding multitude,
When spring is blythe, and trees are rosy-hued,
And its vast overture the forest weaves.
But, ah, through mirth, might my bow twang of pain;
Fretting of broken nests and wingèd-slain!

WIND FROM THE EAST

Flower, dropped to the flame,
Ashes your ashes claim,
Though, in that cruel heat
Flickers my own heart's beat.

Through the smoke's drifting spire,
I see another pyre;
Another fiery shrine
For loveliness supine.

In far dusk of the East,
The sacrificial priest
Binds to the cord and wood
The Indian widowhood.

The involuted wreath
Of smoke, disparts its sheath,
Upon a waking dream
Of sacrifice supreme.

While on its funeral pile
Shrivels my flower the while:
And winds from the East are blown
Over my own hearth-stone.

BEAUVAIS CATHEDRAL*

Know you the legend of the perfect fane?
How it should builded be with Amiens' nave,
That Chartres should lend her faultless towers twain,
And Beauvais her bright choir's architrave?
When I first saw that choir's crystal ball,
Meshed in the graven beauty of the stone,
—Naveless indeed—but with its steep-set wall
Pierced with the hues of any bubble, blown
To sunny air; or petalled, curve on curve,
And stamened, like a flower's deep recess,
With all its columns and its arches' swerve,
Needing no nave for perfect loveliness:
I thought me of a broken flower I found,
Stemless, but perfect, dropped upon the ground.

* Beauvais Cathedral has no nave.

EXPERIENCE

Yes—life is hard; but once, in sorest need,
I cast a pebble down a dim, deep well;
Since when, my ears have never lost the sound
Of that sure plash, where my small pebble
fell.

NAMESAKE

My name was called—and as I turned
With quick response—your young voice came,
Thrilled with the pride of ownership,
Calling sweet "Adsum" to my name!

Ah, once I gazed into a glass,
A magic glass—and there was seen,
Not this sad, tear-marked face, but yours,
Vivid upon the mirror's sheen.

And, once, grave Autumn filched a gown
Of tender green, and bound her hair
With Hyacinth. Then o'er a pool
She wept, to see herself so fair!

TO A YOUNG POET

I've watched the soft unfurling of thy wings
As I have watched the palpitating birth
Of a bright moth, unfolding to grey earth
Its patch of colour, with slow flutterings
Of crumpled wings, that, later, set to mirth
And circling beauty, shall print faery rings,
—After the cocoon winter's cramp and dearth—
Upon the azure meadow of the spring's
Eternal sky. But on thy pulsing sails,
Down morning's path, thou dreaming saunterer,
Dazzled by life, and all that it entails,
I see imperial gold and purple stir;
Presage of that bold wing that mounts the gales—
Of vision, the unerring harbinger!

HAUS-GEIST

High up it stood, on the sunburned ledge,
Grey and wrinkled and spare;
Its pent porch, like a withered hand,
Held 'gainst the western glare.

The hand had fallen when I passed,
As if outspent, at rest;
It lay against the faded boards,
As folded on a breast.

Was the gaunt house dead in the bright daylight,
Shuttered eyes closed to the sun;
Marked by Atropus, where it stood,
Its tenuous thread outspun?

Had its soul slipped through the fastened door,
From the old sordid strife,
To feel the balm of dewy day,
And climb again to life?

For there, in the meagre garden plot,
Against the time-stained gate,
A pillared mass of Larkspur flame
Soared, blue, intense, elate.

DESERT

The way is very long,
Measured by dragging feet;
And, beating down my eyes,
The sky is blue with heat.

My mouth is gritted through,
And parched by blowing sand;
I sift its foolish gold
Through faint and palsied hand.

O little spot of green,
I strain and pant to gain!
Beacon, that somewhere lights
This waveless, empty main!

Senses, beyond my sense,
Your hidden life perceive;
Mirages of the night
The tortured day retrieve.

Somewhere, the dews and shade
Of bending tree!
Somewhere, a spring, that lives
To quicken me!

LOVE'S SONG

You are to me the blessing of dawn,
When my hopes are in flower;
You are the star, that first opes heaven's gate,
At twilight hour.

You are the sunlit meadow, at noon,
Where my joys spring knee-deep;
And the wood road, where lip-fingered trees
Our secrets keep.

You are the wind, round the pathless world,
That sang, its mate to find,
And I replied, with answering chord,
To you, O wind!

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When my hopes are in flower;
You are the star, that first opes heaven's gate,
At twilight hour.

You are the sunlit meadow, at noon,
Where my joys spring knee-deep;
And the wood road, where lip-fingered trees
Our secrets keep.

You are the wind, round the pathless world,
That sang, its mate to find,
And I replied, with answering chord,
To you, O wind!

SIMILITUDE

This is the picture of that happy place;
Of that far sea-path, this, the counterpart;
Interpreted by the supremest art,
And focused in its framing's golden case.
Here can I almost tread that path, apart,
And smell that Clethra by the spicy sea,
Whose Mecca blooms allure the pilgrim bee.
The shy wind's touch importunes at my heart;
I hear him draw his bow on that tree-crest,
In a high orchestra of harping boughs,
Whose dark and mullioned tracery allows
The filtering of gold light from the west.
And, by the grace of a sixth, subtler sense,
I feel the unrisen moon's red imminence.

RECOGNITION

This face we know as Lincoln's: wan, awry,
Moulded to features of a common guise;
Unheeded of the stranger, passing by,
Save for the soul that sentinels the eyes.

When his essential being we shall see,
In that great gathering, at our spirits' goal,
What the fair beauty of its panoply,
When, face to face, we recognize the soul!

ARBOR VITAE

We listen, at cool of day,
For a step through garden dew;
O step and voice from the morning world,
Make us anew!

We have companied with Death,
And have withered in his blight;
The prescient red of our morning pales,
Fore-knowing night.

Our moments drop like the rain
Of brief and vanishing showers,
Lonely and stark are the naked boughs
That Death deflowers.

Thou, Planter of Eden's trees,
Thou, Walker of garden ways,
Speak once again through the cool of eve,
Ancient of Days!

Oh, turn from the gate away
The two-edged fiery strife!
Give from the tree that Thou once withheld,
The fruit of life.

WINDS

Through the long day the fitful winds have
blown,
Confused of speech, and lacking dominant;
Discordant, in a dreary monotone,
With fluttering whirls, and sighings petulant.
But when the passing day a shot wing dips,
To trail its fringes in the cooling sea,
And mark with vermeil all the shining ships,
Then, a clear sound stirs from the ecstasy;
The high soprano of the evening sings,
To herd the scattered Ariels of the air,
And set their mouths to silver trumpetings:
And what the winds could not to day declare,
On the diapason of darkness sped,
The sacred word is to the stillness said.

ROSA BEATA

I YEARN to show to thine expectancy
A rounded symmetry of root and bough;
I hear thy constant benedicite—
"Taller and fairer than thy brethren, thou!"

And, armed with love's own hazel wand, desire,
Thine eyes create the beauty they would see;
Spreading these shrunken branches ever higher,
With mystic sap of thine own alchemy.

To my wan gaze, not even thy sweet faith
Cures the warped growth, revives the withered leaves;
Of all that should have been, the mocking wraith:
Where songs should nest, the blanching spider weaves.

And yet, thy benizons environ me!
Still thy true eyes behold me passing fair!
Shall such faith fool thee and dishonour thee?
Her right of birth my stunted life forswear?

No! In dreaming of a consummation,
Fairer than even your desire knows,
Vibrant with vision, and divine elation,
Flowers unseen my being's perfect rose.

PARADOX

Mine was a small white flower,
Bent to a rack of wind;
The piercing shaft of the shower,
Ruthless its heart to find,
Has swept its petals to air,
Has left its deep heart bare.

O paradox of life!
The dove that 'mongst pots has lain,
Is she whose feathers are rife
With gold. Insistent refrain,
That choruses all our days
With yeas that are born of nays;
And a ruined flower's wraith
Is ecstasy of faith!

HOLIDAY

Summer, be my playfellow!
Teach me all your merry mood;
Hide and seek me through the wood,
To and fro!
I can find you, where e'er hid,
By your little lilting laugh
That the birds go mimicking;
By your fragrance, that to quaff
Flowers go a pilfering
With no fear of being chid.
Take my hand, and let me tread
In that long and linkèd dance,
That, throughout the vale's expanse,
Footprints it with white and red.
Then, beneath some balmy tree,
Woo me to a sunny trance:
Give me to dream that I am free
From all that poor conventions mean;
From shackles of hypocrisy.
Cradle me in cooling green;
Bring down, from out the sapphire skies,
—Not fire, that Prometheus drew—
But healing dew!
And when you speed me on my way,
Back to work and every day,
Bestow the peace upon my eyes,
Of those who 've looked on Paradise!

TEMPTATION

At his side a curtain hangs
  For his proof;
His desire is its warp,
  Law its woof.

Thitherward the gardens lie
  Of his heart,
And the folds, at lightest touch,
  Would dispart.

Gusty winds the curtain fills,
  And it sways;
But, he's master of his soul,
  And it stays.

A GATE OF DREAM

I DREAM a dream
When Fancy wanders like a spirit-breeze
Through Sleep's dim trees;
And golden gleam
The bending fruits of my fulfilled desire.

Away from high-road flint and heat,
Where my feet lag and tire—
Away from metronomic beat
Of Night on Day, of Death on Life—
I slip away from strife,
To where the trees bear healing in their leaves,
And no one sins or grieves,
For Ransomed Being walks serene, elate!

And, in that Eden, I, another Eve,
No anguish to retrieve,
Have heard God call me good when I have
passed that gate!

THE SURPRISE

When Love stoops low in merry guise,
—His hands sweet bars against our light—
We thrill to guess the dear delight
He holds above our blinded eyes.

With that great love that men name Death,
Shall it be too upon that wise?
Is it for rapture and surprise
He first veils eyes and hushes breath?

ON THE GORNERGRAT

We have climbed above the line
Of hemlock and fir and pine;
Like Samson, the giant's shorn
Of tree and of bush and vine.

We have reached the rocky nest
The mountain makes of its breast,
Where rills and rivers are born
From lonely snows of its crest.

Where the earth can touch the sky
With the hills, uplifted high
In that dance's rhythmic beat
Of the primal harmony.

The veil of the hills is rent;
We have heard the voices pent
Where the rocks and waters meet
And deeps and shallows are blent.

With delicate sense, in sense,
The strings of our being, tense,
We have heard the light of stars
In their brooding imminence.

The speech of stillness is ours;
The meaning of shine and showers,
Where, rifting its cloudy bars,
The Matterhorn's whiteness towers:

And our souls are henceforth fraught
With the deeper intent taught;
The wings of our souls grow fleet,
With finer fibre inwrought.

An infinite, starry thrill
Our vision and hearing fill;
The shoes are loosed from our feet;
Our souls are shriven and still.

FOLK SONG

It is the leap of the fount,
The gnome of the hill,
The smoke of the mount,
The naiad of rill.
It is the smell of the pine,
The globe of the vine,
The look in the eyes
Of the woman who bends cradle-wise;
Of the man who looks at the maid,
Of her answering look, unafraid.
The salt that savours the meal,
The shrine where the people kneel;
The tear that the night leaves the flowers,
The reel of the daylight hours;
The kiss of the eve,
When the shadows grieve.

A poet gave it a name,
Invisible cap he wore,
So, he passed away as he came:
But, it sings him o'er and o'er,
And nests his fame in that stalwart tree,
Where the people's lore, unfadingly,
Spreads branches evermore.

ROSA DOLOROSA

See, sorrow of the world,
Climbeth, a vine;
Tortuous branches curled,
Life intertwine.

Screening the sun and stars,
Leaves drip with tears;
And thorns are dank with blood,
Shed through the years.

But, from the spikèd bough,
Behold what grows!
Sorrow's evolvèd crown,
Sorrow's own rose!

Rose, that King David won,
Through bitter loss;
Rose, that the Maries saw
Spring near the cross!

VIGIL

From the pale lake of the long twilight sky,
Where few, slow stars were dropping plummet-line;
Kneeling upon its brink of mystery,
I saw emerge, in sleeve of samite fine,
A hand, that raised on high a gleaming blade;
And where the star of Eve broke through the cool
Of rippling cloud, and flashed athwart the shade,
I saw Excalibur rise from the pool.
Before the dawn had nimbused the dark hill
The brilliant hilt had sunk away from sight,
As once, at Lyonesse: but the brave thrill
My sword-hand felt before that vision bright,
Is with me still, and turns me to the day
With a new temper for the soul's essay.

GOSSIPS

Little neighbours of the sod,
Capped in yellow, blue and red;
Small feet, in green mosses shod,
Small thirsts, by the night dews fed!
How near are you cousins mine?
By what intuitions led,
Do you rise from mouldy bed?
By what obedience divine
Brim with fragrance, as with wine,
Cups, outblown with subtler grace
Than Cellini and his race
Ever gave to cup or shrine?
Whence that generosity,
Calling wingèd things to sup,
Bids you lift a sweetened cup
To the painted Moth and Bee?
Or woo the wind to bend and take
Largesse on his wings, to shake
And scatter all along his way?
I too, summoned from the clod,
Must to my full stature rise,
Lift my cup some thirst to slake,
'Dress me to some fair emprise.
Little neighbours of the sod,
Kin to me, and kin to God!

TO-DAY

Walking the hills of morn,
Holding the star of dawn,
Cometh To-day:
Catch at her hem, and pray
That she will loiter slow;
All that of time we know
Lies in those shadow hours
Dialled by her frail flowers.

Too soon, with subtle grace,
Turning her lovely face,
She'll slip away,
To be but Yesterday!
And when, her distant feet,
We strain our eyes to greet,
Trucing our sorrow,
We'll call her then, To-morrow!

Ah, if we were not blind!
Counting before, behind;
Narrowing sight
To mourn the moment's flight!
There be no yesterdays,
No morrows or to-days,
If we but knew to scan
The one, supernal plan.

THE GLASS

Truth held her glass:
I knew not the soul I saw
For its warp and stain and flaw;
"These are the stains I have known
On other souls than my own:
This is not the soul of my ken."
And I shrank from the image, when
Truth held up her glass.

Truth held her glass—
The light, from a deed forgot,
Had blurred and dimmed each spot;
But I shrank with deeper shame
To utter my own soul's name,
To take my own soul's meed,
To claim my own soul's deed:
And I knew my soul still less,
In its guise of righteousness,
When Truth held her glass.

REVELATION

Where the long sea lifts and relifts its waves
In iterated patience of despair,
To splinter into fragments on the sands,
And night is dark with sad futilities;
Then, from a mystic, unseen stem is blown
The perfect flower of the lily moon,
From whose wide open petals trembles light,
To make a highway through the trackless
dark,
And light vast horizons to certainty.
So, when the air is black about our souls,
When, with that patience that is kin to God's,
We've builded walls that tumble into foam,
And our tides ebb, with death a-drag at them:
Then, how it comes we know not, save that God
Sends the sap up to feed the mystic bloom,
A perfect moment rises on our night,
And in its wake a footway spans the dark,
Whereon we tread to things invisible.

TO ROBERT AND ELIZABETH BROWNING

On what bright quest are your spirits sped,
Passers from Casa Guidi's shade,
Now that the sheath has dropped from the blade,
Now that the dart from the bow has fled?

Separate flames in a single fire,
Diverse tongues, and one burning coal;
Runners twain to a single goal,
Strikers both on humanity's lyre!

Now that the masque of this life is shed,
Feeling the sun of another world,
Your souls in the winds of God unfurled,
On what bright quest are your spirits sped?

Florence, 1905.

MIRACLE

For my sake in the orchard-close,
  Love stripped every tree;
But, miracle! the empty boughs
  Laden low I see.

And Love has gathered every flower
  To tapestry the day;
But, see! to top of yonder hill
  Buds are standing gay.

Love stayed 'till the clocks ran down;
  "Time is so short, ah me!"
Then, on a sudden, in Love's eyes,
  Grew—Eternity!

TIDES

My brain lies trancèd, like some lonely strand,
When its long wave has turned it to the sea;
Its murky light is set to sober key,
And tangled flotsam cumbers the dun sand.
Bright waters, that have ebbed from where I stand,
Turn in your flight, and draw again to me;
To flood this waste with your pure ecstasy,
With rush and tang my listless thought expand.
So, when I'm brimmed with your returning tide,
E'en this dark hulk that's stranded on my beach,
Shall lift a daring sail, the deeps to ride,
Dyed with Tyrîan of a sonnet's speech,
That out where sea and sky are misty-wide,
The port of some far horizon may reach.

EAST TO WEST

The sun moves slow through sea of fire,
His sails set to the glare:
Towed to the harbour of the West,
Like "Fighting Téméraire":
All of his streaming pennants lit
With pathos of that name,
And, a long glory in his wake,
Breaks a red sea of flame.

Yonder, in gray, translucent East,
The Moon Ship lights her prow,
And each, of all her fleet of stars,
Hangs lamp upon its bow.
Peace, her brief armistice has won,
And East to West breathes benizon.

THE PAWN

THERE is no terror in immensity;
No fear that little things shall be forgot:
Eternity itself shall never blot
Aught from the scheme of things; for it was
He,
The architect of buttressed Dolomites,
Who planned each pebble and each sandy grain:
And shall we fear for lapses in the brain
Of God? Because of unseen, countless lights
Out on the verge of things, shall He forget
This little taper that He set to shine
And which, though blown about, is shining yet,
In the small candlestick that I call mine?
Designer of the problem on the board,
I am thy pawn, Thou'lt not forget me, Lord!

THE SHUT DOOR

Outrunning my own soul,
I reached the house of Love;
The door was shut;—the wall
Rose cold above.

I pulled the heavy latch,—
The iron chilled and mocked:
My pulsing hand dropped low,—
The door was locked!

I struck the senseless wood,
I struck—and silence grew;
And with its numbing breath
My passion slew.

And next, to that hard door
I laid my palm and cheek,
And sobbed the pleading word
I could not speak.

Then, as I turned to go,
My soul stood in the way;
And, face to very face,
My soul did say:

"Know this sin for thine own!
Let Love, himself, go free:
'Tis thou hast shut Love's door,
And turned Love's key."

Not alone in paling'd parks
Are the city's flowers found;
Where the Tulips' scarlet frocks,
Set in geometric marks,
Pricked in lines, like fire-sparks,
Go, outlining grass and rocks.
There, the fountains faint and flare
In the breezes' virelay,
Braiding their long, fluttering hair;
Tiptoeing in idle sway
O'er the bowl, that Lilies bound
With their white mosaics round.

Not alone upon the mart,
Sheltered behind crystal panes,
Where the florist's graceful art,
With a glowing counterpart,
All the lush of summer feigns.

But, with an inner sight,
Look down that narrow way
Whose shadows start at day,
And huddle from the light.
Or, on that grey, grim square
That's fought its way to air,
With its poor trap set for a fill of sun,
And see the tumult gay
Of riot bloom, that like the living spray
From a white wave, breaks in its frolic fun!

The alleys strait
Turn into twilight lanes,
Where drifting bloom
The shadows luminate:
And, trod by flower trains
That spread adown the gloom,
The sordid street becomes a garden sweet.

There, Roses congregate,
And, heads elate,
Entwine their sprays
In myriad, merry plays;
The Pinks are pointing all their dainty toes,
In gamesome rows;
And Trumpet-flowers, under claspèd arch,
Do march, and counter-march;
While every little flower-chap
Throws up his pretty cap.

But, other flowers live in that drear place,
—Existence, irony has misnamed life,—
A sorry, stunted little populace
Of spindled weeds, with the relentless knife
Of cold neglect, laid at their tender roots;
While all those small, pale shoots
They give, confiding, to the mocking air,
Hang, blackened by despair.

Like a parched flower, in pot,
Set on the world's high window sill,
And then, forgot,
The wistful beauty of the lifted bud,
Trampled to mud,
What are they but a mark for the harsh winds
to kill!

O City! gardener of the Tulip bed,
And setter of the Lily pavement fine,
Where the exotics of the window flaunt;
What of the flowers that haunt
Your outcast ways, and in the darkness pine?
The stricken buds, that ere they live are dead!

Such, bloom not for a day,
But these are they
Who, surely, in another city street,
—The Eternal One
Their vivifying sun—
Shall play their happy games, and run their
races fleet.

TRANSMIGRATION

Creeping from the gloom
Of thy woven tomb,
Don thine ancient dress,
Webbed of loveliness;
Bound by golden hems,
Set with unknown gems,
And, in dreamy trance,
Spread for thy brief dance.

Spoils of aeons girt
That frail, silken skirt;
Such resplendent state
Who can emulate?
Where another pace
Like the circling grace,
With high poises set,
Of thy minuet?

Moth, that worm began,
In unending plan;
Moth, that draws from fire
Insatiable desire;
Moth, escaped from night,
To die for love of light;
What, in next degree,
Shall thy glory be?

KINSHIP

I AM a mark in ancient hieroglyphs of the sand:
I am a drop in the water, drumming its march to land:
I am a thread that's woven into the brooding nest:
I am the blinded seed, driven to east and west.

Low with the spreading herb, high up on the mountain side:
—Turrets not made with hands,—in their pinnacles I abide:
A breath of the breathing lift, to vaster heights I win,
And high-piled dust of stars I know for kith and kin.

Yet, of all these my brothers, I alone am the sigh,
I alone, in the night, am the bitter and rending cry:
I alone am the quest, persistent amid the strife,
And passing through the bars, I am both death and life.

POET-BIRTH

Rhythmical song of the hills,
Chanting of springing sod;
Mystical sign of the curving strand,
Drawn by the finger of God!

Quicken one, dumb from his birth,
With your harmonies imbue.
Open his sense to stir in that womb
Whence all may be born anew.

So, when with tune of the gale,
Aeolus fingers the tree,
And Autumn's tattered and dun skirts trail
Along the edge of the sea;

When the sun begins to cower,
And the nights are black and long,
He can take from his breast a flower,
Hearten the world with a song.

PERSONALITY

1

Although the universal chant be one,
Star upon star, poised in the infinite,
Strings its bright harp with its essential light;
Isolate notes make up the unison.
Beyond our hearing sound those altos clear,
Whose antiphons, where star-worlds wheel their lone
Abysmal spheres, each booms its organ-tone.
Orion sings, ringed in an atmosphere
Of his own melody's clear, shining round;
In his deep chant, Mars casts his heart of fire,
And Sirius' flames in lilts of light aspire:
Pleiads' bright arms time their own cymbals' sound.
While Cynthia croons her hymn of ministry,
Earth's sad, brave song winds through the harmony.

As with the stars, so with the lives of men,
Illimitable light, that floods the whole,
Said, "be *thou* light," to each concentred soul,
And focus must, forevermore, as then.
We shrink from drowning in the mighty All;
We'd be ourselves, and wear our lives' own hue;
Life, with its colours, must our lives imbue;
A pale Nirvana must our souls appall!
Let that white Light, round which our orbits move,
Our beings aureole with Iris rays:
Let us not miss from everlasting ways
The human tints we in each other love.
Dear friend, in that high way that spirits tread,
Thy blue be blue, thy red forever red!

PILGRIMAGE

The plot thou gavest me lies ashen bare,
Save for a crop of bramble and of tare.

My pilgrim staff lies broken into twain,
My shoes are sodden with the mud and rain.

Lord, I am lost—my self I cannot find—
My cut too deep for any man to bind.

Thy pilgrim train has left me far behind,
It's late to dig, no sheaves have I to bind.

The sky is dank and dark, no kindly star
Silvers the crossing of my window bar.

But on this blackened hearth, still in Thy name,
I lay some twisted sticks to kindle flame;

And lift the latchet of the broken door,
And strew soft rushes on the earthen floor.

Then, on the board I place the bread and cup;
—But, if alone, alone I cannot sup—

So, close to where the pane with night is wet,
This little candle of my love I set.

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